

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 04379 311549Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 NEAE-00 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 INR-10 INRE-00
EB-08 PM-05 AF-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 ACDA-12 SSO-00
/073 W

-----024674 311643Z /44S

O R 311520Z JUL 78 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9009
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4379

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: MOTS, PEPR, SY, SU, ET
SUBJ: SYRIAN AID TO ERITREA

REF: DAMASCUS 4363 (NOTAL)

1. EMBASSY INFORMED BY MR. RICHARD BERNARD, PRESIDENT, WORLD
AIR LEASING CORP. OF MIAMI, THAT A PLANE (CONVAIR 880) HE HAS
CHARTERED TO THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH A LEBANESE MIDDLEMAN
IS CARRYING ARMS AND AMMUNITION TO PORT SUDAN FOR TRANSHIPMENT
TO ERITREA. BERNARD SAID THAT INITIAL FLIGHT CARRIED ONLY FOOD-
STUFFS BUT THREE SUBSEQUENT SHIPMENTS WERE STRICTLY ARMS AND
AMMUNITION.

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2. BERNARD DID NOT KNOW FULL CONTENTS OF SHIPMENT BUT SAID
THAT IT AMOUNTED TO 50 THOUSAND POUNDS A TRIP. HE DID
NOTE BOXES MARKED 7.62 MM AMMUNITION AND SAW HOLLOW
TUBES OF 120 MM WHICH HE THINKS MAY HAVE BEEN FOR
MORTARS. BERNARD BELIEVES THAT AIR FORCE G-2 CHIEF,
MUHAMMAD AL-KHULI IS AT DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL AIR-
PORT EVERY EVENING FROM 9 TO 11 TO SUPERVISE SHIPMENTS

AND RETURNS IN EARLY MORNING HOURS FOR PLANE'S DEPARTURE.

3. BERNARD ASKED SYRIANS WHO WAS FINANCING THE SHIPMENTS AND WAS TOLD THAT IT WAS THE KUWAITIS. PLANES HAVE DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCE TO OVERFLY BOTH JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA ON THEIR WAY TO PORT SUDAN. BERNARD UNDERSTANDS THAT PRIOR TO CHARTERING HIS PLANE THE SYRIANS WERE USING TMA WHICH HAD FLOWN 45 SORTEES OVER 135-DAY PERIOD PRESUMABLY CARRYING ARMS FOR THE ERITERANS.

4. CURRENTLY BERNARD'S CONTRACT CALLS FOR HIS PLANE AND SIX-MAN CREW TO FLY 11 MORE FLIGHTS, BUT AS REFTEL NOTES HE HAS LOST ALL CONTACT WITH THE PLANE WHICH LEFT FOR PORT SUDAN SUNDAY MORNING JULY 30. PELLETREAU

NOTE BY OC/T: DISTRIBUTION CO-ORDINATED WITH S/S-O MS. ROBINSON.

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